# Boris Godunov

Boris Godunov (about 1552 – 1605) was the Russian tsar since 1598; came to power in the time of “oprichnina”; was the tsar Fedor Ivanovich’s wife’s brother and actually rulled the state instead of him. He strengthered the central authoritybaning on the nobility and supported peasants enslavement Boris Feodorovich Godunov (about 1549 or 1552 – April 13/23, 1605, Moscow), the Russian tsar.

**Origin**

According to the legend the Godunovs came from the tatar prince Chet. Who came to Russia in the time of Ivan Kalita. This legend is written down in the annals dating back to the beginning of the 17th century. According to the tsar chronicle of 1555 the Godunovs (as well as Saburovs, the Velyaminous) come from Dmitriy Zern, who was evidently, a feudal lord from Kostroma. Inspite of the validity of this point of view, there is still a chance that there is some truth in the legend about Chet too. And it is not accidental that some ancestors of separate branches of Chet’s descendants had the names of the tatar origin (Sabur, Godun).

Boris Feodorovich Godunov’s father died at the end of the Gos. The son became an “oprichnik”. He was married to the tsar’s favorit Malyuta Skuratov’s daughtes. Since the beginning of 1570s the rise of the Godunovs begins. Boris Feodorovich himself, wasn’t close to the tsar Ivan the Terrible, though he became a boyar in September, 1580. At least on the wedding of the tsar and Maria the Nude (November, 1580). He was only tsaritsa’s (“bridesmade”) “drugka”. But the increasing role of the family in significant, as the whole clan of the Godunovs were present on the wedding. They slowly but steadily went up the rank stairs, at the end of the 1570s – the beginning of the 1580s they won several cases and so security their position among the Moscow nobility. Godunov was clever and cautious, trying to keep in the backgroung for the time being. The tsar’s son Feodor was married the Godunov’s sister Irine. Godunov’s rise is the result of a historical accident and, at the same time, the manifestation of the common regularity of the self-development of Russian society. Boris would have been on of the many Godunovs in the History, if there hadn’t happened a quarrel between the tsar and his son Ivan in Alexandrovsk Sloboda November, 9, 1581. Ivan the Terrible sbruk his son with his cane and got in a temple and in ten days (November, 19) the prince died. After Ivan Ivanovich’s death Feodor became the successor to the throne.

Up to 1584 Godunov wasn’t close to the tsar, but some deeds and plans of Ivan the Terrible affected the interests of the Godunovs and Boris inpanticular radically. The tsar wanted to marry Maria Gastings, a relative of Elizabeth, queen of England and to dissolve the marriage between Feodor and childless Irine Godunov. In the tsar’s last year Godunov got a great influence at the count. Together witn B. J. Belsky he became of Ivan the Terrible’s favorites. Godunov’s role in the death of the tsar is not quite clear March, 18, 1584 Ivan the Terrible, according to D. Gorsey’s evidence, was “strangled”. It is possible, that there was a plot against the tsar. However, anthropologist M. M. Gerasimov, who was studying the tsar during the last minutes of his lofe and they announced the tsar’s death from the porch.

Feodor Ivanovich came to the throne. The new tsar was incapable of rulling the country and required a clever adviser. The struggle for the right to be the spokesman of the interests if the new monarch flared up and Boris came the winner out of it. Feodor reigned for 14 years and, at least, 13 of them Godunov was the actual ruller.

**Internal and Foreign Policy of Godunov’s Government.**

The activity of Godunov’s Government timed at all-round streng the ning of statehood. Due to his efforts the first Russian patriarch, metropolitan Yov, was elected. The establishment of patriachate testified to the enhanced prestige of Russia.

In internal policy of Godunov’s government the common sence and thrift prevaited. Unprecedent construction if cities and fortifications took place. The church building was also carried to facilitate the stale of “posadsky” people. The big servants (officials) held trading people and handcraftsmen in their “white slobodas”, which were released from paying the state taxes, before. But now everyone who was engaged in trade and crafts should enter “posadsky” communities and participate in the payment of dutries to the treasury. So the number of such people increased, and each payer had to pay less, as the total sum remained constant.

The economical crisis of 1570s – the beginning of 1580s (forced) caused the establishment of serfhood. In 1597 the decree of “                      ”, according to which the peasants who had run from their masters “during the last five years were subject to investigation, caurt and returning back to the peaces they lived before”. Those who ran six and more years ago weren’tsubject to that decree and more years ago weren’t subject to that decree and didn’t have to be returned to their former owners.

In foreign policy Godunov proved to be a talented diplomat. On the 18th of May in 1595 in Tjavrin (near Ivangorod) the peace treaty between Russia and Sweden was concluded. Godunov managed to take avantage of a difficult internal political situation in Sweden, - and Russia, according to the treaty, got back Ivangorod, Yam, Koporye and volost Korela.

**Godunov’s reign.**

Godunov’s way to the throne wasn’t easy. In Uglich the successor to the throne Dmitriy, the son of Ivan the Terrible’s six wife, grew up. On the 15th of May in 1591 tsarevich dead under the obscure circumtrances. The official investigation was carried out by the boyar V. I. Shujsky. Trying to please Godunov he reduced the happening to the “negligence” of Maria the Nade, as a result of which Dmitry accidentally stabbed himself with a Knife, while playing with his coevals. Tsarevich was still, he stuffered from fits and to give a Knife to the child was really criminal. It is possible that Godunov was involved in Dmitriy’s death, as only to make the nurse let the sick child play with a Knife would be enough. January 6, 1598 the tsar Feodor died, and Febriary 17, The Zemsky Cathedral elected the new tsar, his brother-in-law – Boris Godunov. They supported him as his activity as a favorite was highly valued by his contemporaries. Boris’s reign was marked by the beginning raproachment of Russia with the West. No sovereign in Russia liked the foreigners as much as Godunov did. He began to invite the foreigners to service, releasing them from paying taxes. The new tsar even wanted to invite the scientists from Germany, England, Spain, France and other countries in order to found in Moscow a high school, were different languages would be taught, but the church opposed the idea.

Boris’s reign began successfully. However, really terrible events broke out soon. In 1601 there were long rains, and then early frosts came and, according to the contemporary, “                                   ”. The next year the poor harvest repeated. The famine, lasting three years, broke out. The price of bread increased in 100 times. Boris forbade to sell bread at a price higher than the settled limit, he even resorted to the prosecufron of those who inflated prices, but he didn’t succeed. Trying to help the starving he didn’t spare means, widely distributing money. But the price of bread was rising and money was losing its value. Boris ordered to open the imperial barns for the starving. But even theit stocks were not sufficient for all hungry people, as having found out about the distribution, people from all the ends of the country came to Moscow, having left the poor stocks which, nevertheless, were available of their places. About 127 thousand people starved and were buried in Moscow, but sometimes there wasn’t enough time to bury all of them. The cases of man-eaters appeared. People started to think that it was a Divine penalty. There appeared the belief that Boris’s reign wasn’t blessed by God as it was lawless and was achieved through a lie. And so it couldn’t end in something good.

In 1601 – 1602 Godunov even resorted to the restoration of Youriev Day. To tell the truth, he permitted only the export, not the going out of peasants. Noblemen thus rescaled their manors from final desolation and ruin. The permission given by Godunov concerned only small servant people, and didn’t spread on the grounds of the members of the Boyar Duma and the clergy. But even this step didn’t increase the tsar’s popularity. National revolts began. The largest one was the revoltunder leadership of the ataman Khlop in 1603. Cossacks and lackeys took pant in it mainly. The tsar’s army managed to defeat the rebels but nothing could calm down the country – it was too late. There were rumours in the country that the genuine tsarevitch is alive. Godunov understood the threat, as in comparison with the “borne” sovereign he has nobody. No wonder his vituperators called him “slavetsar”.

At the beginning of 1604 the letter from a foreigner from Narva was intercepted. It contained the information that miraculously saved Dmitriy was with the Cossacks and Moscow would see some big misfortunes soon. The investigation proved that the imposter was Grigiriy Otrepjev, coming from the galitek noblemen, who ran to Poland in 1602.

On the 16th of October in 1604 the Fals Dmitriy with few Poles and Cossacks set out to Moscow. Ewen the Moscow patriarch’s damnations didn’t cool the national enthusiasm. In a January 1605 governmental armies, however, defeated the imposter and he had to go to Putivl. But the imposter’s power was not in the army, but in the people’s belief that he was the heir-at-law. The Cossacks from all the parts of Russia began come to Dmitriy.

On the 13th of April in 1605 Boris Godunov seemed to be cheerful and healthy, ate a lot and with big appetite. Then went to the tower, from which he often surreged Moscow. Soon he descended, saying that he was unwell. The doctor was send for, but the tsar fill worse, blood came from his nose and ears. The tsar fainted away, and soon died. The were rumours that Godunov poisoned himself in an attack of despair. He was buried in Kremlin Arkhangelsk Cathedral/ Boris’s son Feodor, an educated and extremely clever young man, came to the throne.

Soon the riot, caused by Dmitriy the False, took place in Moscow. The tsar Feodor and his mother were killed, and only Boris’s daughter Xenia stayed alive. But the desolate fate of the imposter’s slave-woman awaited her. It was officiality declared that the tsar and his mother poisoned themselves. Their bodies were showcases. Then Boris’s coffin was taken out from Arkhangelsk Cathedral and buried again in Varsonotsk Monastery near  Lubjanka. His family were buried in the same place, without bural services as suicides.